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Now is a Great Time to Find Out What FOCUS Can Offer Your Family

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Summertime is a time for fun in the sun, family vacations and a break for the kids from school. But summer also represents a time of transition, change and stress – it’s the most common time of year for Permanent Change of Duty Station (PCS) orders to be carried out– which can be hectic, challenging and not so fun. As the children wind down from the school year, parents are steadily packing, gathering school and medical records and to add to the stress, a parent may be deployed.

There are many great support resources through Fleet and Family Service Centers and Marine Corps Community Services to assist in a PCS move, but what about the family who is dealing not just with the strain of a PCS move, but also the challenges of deployments and high operational tempo stressors?

In March 2008 Project FOCUS (Families OverComing Under Stress) was developed and implemented by the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. FOCUS is a family-centered resiliency training program based on evidence-based interventions that enhance understanding, psychological health and developmental outcomes for highly stressed children and families. FOCUS services include direct face-to-face interactions with program specialists and are also available to families not located together. The FOCUS program has a web-based application called FOCUS World that allows families to continue receiving FOCUS services while separated.

[FOCUS World](#) provides parents and children with training in key resiliency skills, including communication, emotional regulation, problem-solving, goal-setting, and managing deployment stressors. Such skills are taught through interactive features, including the Family Narrative Timeline, Future Family, and the Feeling Thermometer, all of which are designed to provide instruction and practice in the key FOCUS skills. For example, family members are able to upload photos so they can share important events and this helps families maintain cohesion during deployments. An i-chat feature has been developed to allow service members to remain involved in parenting at a distance and to facilitate effective co-parenting. Modeling videos on healthy parenting and family intervention have also been

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created to provide guidance for parents around common challenges faced by military families experiencing multiple deployments.

We have found that maintaining continuity of care for families is a key factor in mitigating stress and increasing resilience. A key feature of the FOCUS program is the ability to transfer FOCUS services for a family from one duty station to the next. This allows families to continue without interruption the work they have accomplished in the FOCUS program. The FOCUS staff will connect a moving family to the program closest to their new home, allowing for a smooth and seamless transition.

FOCUS stands for Families OverComing Under Stress, stress comes from many different sources. The FOCUS program is here to serve you and your family. In the coming months, I will post about other aspects of the FOCUS Program, but in the meantime, don't hesitate to respond in the comments section.

To contact your nearest FOCUS location visit www.focusproject.org

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